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FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

UI announces hiring policy change

Vice presidents must approve decisions
Associated Press
September 12, 2008

MOSCOW, Idaho – The University of Idaho's four vice presidents will now have to approve new hires as part of a plan to make sure the school is spending money wisely, officials said.

UI Vice President of Finance and Administration Lloyd Mues said the change in policy will help the university make better choices and become more efficient.

Interim President Steven Daley-Laursen announced the change Wednesday during a speech to faculty and staff.

"We are entering a pretty intense period for decisions," he said.

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Mues said the change is not a hiring freeze, even though there will likely be a delay in filling some positions, and some positions might not be filled at all if it's determined that money would be better spent elsewhere.

"We will pause and go, 'OK, let's stop and look. Is this really the best use of our money?' " he said.

"We're not short of cash," he added. "We're a healthy university. But that doesn't mean we don't have demands and wants and desires."

He said the university gets 37 percent of its money from the state and must generate the remaining 63 percent.

"We are always looking to be more efficient," he said of the hiring policy change. "That is what this is."

Mues said he will be more active in making decisions about hires in areas outside academics. Doug Baker, executive vice president and university provost, will look at prospective hires in the various colleges at the university. Chris Murray, vice president for advancement, will look at

hires involved in philanthropy, marketing and communication. And Jack McIver, vice president for research, will approve hires in that area.

Also during the speech on Wednesday, Daley-Laursen said the school needs to find a way to help its sports teams become more competitive. Some teams have struggled in recent years. The football team posted a 1-11 record last season.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

OUR VIEW: University District idea needed to be shelved (editorial)

Posted on: Thursday, September 11, 2008

The Pullman City Council received a couple hundred reasons to put the brakes on the proposed University District on the city's College Hill.

Apparently, that's what was necessary to finally slow down a proposal that was flying through the system with amazing speed. The council's decision to shelve the discussion about the proposal was a significant step that was desperately needed.

The University District concept first appeared on the public radar as an idea floated by WSU President Elson S. Floyd in February. Four months later a few more details were added to the changes that would give WSU more of a handle on issues such as parking, traffic, noise and violations of the city's nuisance code. It also called for WSU police to increase their presence in the district in the areas of criminal investigations and community-oriented policing strategies.

On Tuesday, the council was asked to sign on to a four-year agreement that had a lot of ideas but few details. Those details could prove important and need to be ironed out and presented to the community before the city is contractually obligated to an agreement.

While university officials insist they talked with all the people involved, it was apparent in the days leading up to Tuesday's meeting and by the turnout at the council session that the university's version of public discourse is a bit different than the community's.

Outside of a good deal of specifics, the public vetting of the university district has been conspicuous in its absence. That process is critical when it's attached to plans that make significant changes to how neighborhoods are dealt with.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

UI provost explains budget overhaul

University's academic chief says hiring freeze, other steps are part of planned process

By Joel Mills

Friday, September 12, 2008

MOSCOW - A new round of belt-tightening at the University of Idaho is part of the grand scheme, not a sign of an impending financial crisis, its provost said Thursday.

"The pieces are coming together, and this is the right time," Doug Baker, the UI's chief academic officer, said of measures announced Wednesday. "It's the logical next step."

Interim President Steven Daley-Laursen mandated a universitywide hiring freeze and called for an accelerated process to reallocate UI budgets over the school year.

He was traveling Thursday and unavailable for comment, according to a UI spokeswoman.

But Baker said now is the time in the university's ongoing planning processes to take action. "Let's take a pause and take a deep breath and say 'let's do this,' " he said.

The academic side of the pending restructuring was instigated by the Faculty Council, Baker said, not the administration.

Late last year it suggested action in the face of scarce resources and rising costs.

"So, the faculty leaders said we need to do this," Baker said.

Council members suggested a two-year process to evaluate academic programs and shift money from weak to strong disciplines.

And while council members wanted to take a measured, deliberate approach to assessing programs, Daley-Laursen said he wants the faculty to buckle down and get it done this semester.

The goal is to focus programs and faculty positions on the cross-disciplinary work that stimulates the evolving state economy and positions students to participate in it, Baker said.

Daley-Laursen's predecessor, Tim White, undertook a similar effort shortly after he took office in 2005. He reallocated funds to create interdisciplinary programs like Waters of the West that fuse once-isolated disciplines to better meet the demands of a global economy.

Other such programs include research into nanomaterials and sustainable communities.

Baker said White probably would have taken similar steps this fall if he hadn't departed to take over the University of California Riverside campus.

He said aside from academics, human resources, the research office, risk management and the registrar's office could be overhauled.

"Some of our processes are not as effective or efficient as they need to be."

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Editorial on schools budget based on false data (editorial)

The Moscow Daily News published an editorial about my budget request for Idaho's public schools, which was based on incorrect data that was not first confirmed with me or my office. Let me take this opportunity to give the readers correct information so they can form an opinion based on accurate data.

The editorial stated: "Luna plans to ask for \$1.495 billion ... a whopping \$405 million increase over the 2006 fiscal year budget proposed by his predecessor, Marilyn Howard."

That is not true.

Yes, I have requested a 5.4 percent increase over the current year — nearly half of which will cover growth in the student population — but the majority of the "whopping" increase referenced in the editorial is not an actual increase in the funding that Idaho schools received.

That's because in August 2006, before I was elected as State Superintendent, the Idaho Legislature met for a special session and passed House Bill 1, which shifted local property taxes to the state general fund in an effort to relieve rising property taxes for many Idahoans. This shift automatically added about \$250 million to the public schools budget. While this change in law appeared to increase the public schools budget, it did not give Idaho schools an additional \$250 million, as the editorial stated. It simply shifted the funding source from local property taxes to the state.

While making comparisons between me and my predecessor, the editorial also failed to mention that while I have requested a 5.4 percent increase for the upcoming year, my predecessor requested increases of 9.2 percent a year, on average.

Since I took office 20 months ago, I have strived to be fiscally responsible when it comes to funding education in Idaho because I know where the money comes from — hard-working taxpayers. As a small business owner, a former school board member and an Idaho taxpayer, I know each and every tax dollar is precious and limited. Whenever I request new funding, I ensure that it goes where we need it most: the classroom.

I have taken this approach at the State Department of Education. My staff and I have worked hard to cut administrative costs. Why? Because I strongly believe that every dollar saved at the administrative level is one more dollar we can put into the classroom.

I have not requested funding for any additional employee positions, but through efficiencies and savings, I found the money to create new positions, such as an Indian Education Coordinator, to provide more technical assistance to Idaho schools and students. We have also found money within the department to give schools the opportunity to try new and innovative programs, such as the First Move chess curriculum used in elementary schools, all without asking taxpayers for additional funding.

Because of this approach, we now have a responsible public schools budget that provides additional money for classroom supplies and materials, textbooks and remediation programs to help students who struggle academically. We also have a statewide Idaho Math Initiative that gives Idaho educators the tools they need to raise student achievement in math. We are

developing a state longitudinal data system, which will provide parents, educators and policymakers with the current and accurate information needed to make better informed decisions in education on a daily basis.

This new budget request includes funding for a statewide dual credit program that will give all Idaho juniors and seniors the opportunity to take college or professional-technical courses while still in high school.

As State Superintendent, I cannot operate in a vacuum. I never craft a public schools budget without considering our state's economy. I recognize this will be a tight budget year, and knowing this, I have submitted a prudent and responsible budget request for Fiscal Year 2010 that provides the critical funding we need to improve student achievement across Idaho.

! Tom Luna is Idaho's Superintendent of Public Instruction.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Boise school superintendent Stan Olson will retire in 2010

He says he'll leave the district in good shape and good hands

Edition Date: 09/12/08

With 18 months left on his contract, Boise School District Superintendent Stan Olson knows that in the city's North End neighborhood, he'll always be remembered for a plan he denies he ever made.

Residents of that Downtown area still tell stories of 2005 and 2006, when they believed Olson and his administration were trying to close down some small neighborhood schools and replace them with a new, larger building.

Olson calls those stories "nonsense."

The schools didn't close, and the district went on to pass a \$94 million bond in 2006 to close four old elementary schools in other parts of town and build two brand-new ones, along with several other new school buildings.

As he takes an early look at his legacy, Olson, 58, is counting off his academic and administrative achievements. He has announced he will retire from his job when his contract ends in June 2010.

"It's a good time to go," said Olson Thursday. "The district is hitting on all cylinders. We are very solid relative to our financial picture, our performance picture, our academic picture."

Olson will be the leader of the 25,000-student district as it undergoes an extensive strategic planning process in the coming year, and he'll also be in place as changes are implemented in the following school year.

He noted that he has worked hard to develop an administrative team that could provide good candidates to succeed him in the superintendent's job -specifically Pete Bailey, a former area director who was promoted last summer to executive director of operations, and Don Coberly, the district's director of curriculum and instruction.

While hiring a new superintendent is the job of the Board of Trustees, "my responsibility is to make sure that they have quality options within the district to make that decision," Olson said.

Bob Kustra, president of Boise State University, said Thursday he's sorry to hear Olson will be leaving.

"He's a great guy and a good friend of the university and of mine personally," Kustra said.

Olson is earning \$171,478 in the superintendent position. He said he hopes to stay in Boise.

"I wish to eventually retire here and reside in the community for the rest of my life," he said Thursday. "I really kind of love this place."

As for the rumor about closing the small neighborhood schools of the North End, Olson said, "that was a misrepresentation from the beginning."

But he doesn't expect the subject to go away.

"It's still going to have to be a topic of discussion for future administrations," Olson said. "How to respect the neighborhood, keep the unique characteristics of the community, and still pay the bills."

Group trying to buy school irked at sale of playground equipment

Edition Date: 09/12/08

Boise School District has sold off the playground equipment at its shuttered Franklin Elementary School, angering supporters of the charter school that is hoping to buy the property.

Superintendent Stan Olson said Thursday that the district sold all the equipment to a neighboring church that had been interested in the playground since the district announced it would close the school. Franklin, once a high school and then an elementary school, closed in June. The students were moved to a new building nearby.

Anser Charter School in Downtown Boise has been trying to buy Franklin and almost 8 acres that the school hopes to turn into a park with help from the city and a neighborhood association. School officials said they still hoped to buy Franklin, but might offer less money because the playground equipment won't be included.

"Replacing playground equipment is really expensive," said Anser Director Suzanne Burton.

"It's quite disappointing for me as a parent," said Liz Tanner, who has four children at Anser and is helping Anser raise money to buy the property. "That's a big selling point for the community space as a whole."

Neighbors have also been trying to help Anser buy the school, to prevent the large open fields from turning into housing or commercial development.

"They genuinely don't care about the impact of the sale of the property on the neighborhood - that's the impression I get," said neighbor Sarah Cunningham, who helped Anser ask the Boise City Council for money to help buy the parcel. "The quality of life in those neighborhoods is going to be impacted."

Olson said Thursday that the district was under no obligation to announce the sale or to offer the equipment to the public at large.

The property, which includes a century-old school building, is expected to go up for sale in the next few months.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Gooding Joint Schools organize under new district superintendent

The Gooding Joint School District Board of Trustees met Tuesday evening for their regular meeting at the district office in Gooding.

Heather Williams, newly hired district superintendent, gave a monthly report saying that in general she is happy with the community and staff attitudes and their willingness to help get the district back on a healthy financial course.

Williams reported that school personnel are volunteering and working together.

"It is inspiring to see everyone helping and I'm happy with the way things are going so far," she said.

The board has embarked on an estimated year-long program to revamp district policy. Williams recommended adopting the Idaho School Boards Association manual and reworking certain areas of policy during each meeting to fit the needs of the Gooding District.

After several minutes of discussion, this was approved with a majority vote. Trustees present were Chairman Raymond Goodman, Lucinda G. Rogers, Lois Wartluft, Tracy Anderson and Elaine Bryant.

In other news, the trustees were told that the high school junior varsity basketball coach has resigned. No information about the resignation was given in the open meeting. The matter was saved for the private trustee session at the end of the meeting.

Gooding High School Principal Eric Rainey said in a phone interview that he is only free to say the coach resigned.

"The JV coach resigned effective immediately and steps have been made to replace him," Rainey said.

Upcoming meetings and activities are posted at the district office entrance at 507 Idaho St. in Gooding. The District Board of Trustees meets the second Tuesday of each month.

UI announces change in hiring process

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"We are entering a pretty intense period for decisions," he said.

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hires involved in philanthropy, marketing and communication. And Jack McIver, vice president for research, will approve hires in that area.

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FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Ririe passes school bond

Voters in Ririe Joint School District approved a \$7.2 million bond that will pay for an expansion of Ririe Middle School. The bond passed with 78.5 percent support, 201 votes for and 55 against.

A two-thirds supermajority was required to pass the measure.

As well as adding five new classrooms to Ririe Middle School, the money will pay for a new gymnasium. As soon as construction is finished, Ririe High School will take over the middle school, and middle school students will be sent to the high school.

District Superintendent Ron Perrenoud said the district will solicit bids for the project as soon as possible, in hopes that they will be returned by February or March. If all goes well, construction could be done as early as fall 2010.

Currently, Perrenoud said, the middle school's capacity is about 280 students. The expansion will increase that number to about 400. With its capacity of about 350, the current high school will have more than enough room for the district's 185 or so middle school students.

Thanks to a state's Bond Levy Equalization Program, district officials expect the bond will not raise property taxes for district patrons. Through the program -- funded by taxes on tobacco products -- the state will reimburse 40 percent of the district's loan payments each year.

Between the Equalization program, healthy growth in the district and the expected payoff of an existing \$1.2 million bond, the district should have enough money to make payments on the new loan without raising taxes, Business Manager Jeff Summers said.

In addition, Summers said, the district's lender has agreed to a cash-flow structure on the loan. The cash-flow structure allows any payments above and beyond the minimum payment to be deducted from its balance. Reducing the balance of the loan reduces the amount of interest the

district has to pay. In this way, Summers said, the district has been able to greatly accelerate paying off its loans.

"When you put all that together, with a small district like us, with the 40 percent from the state, we can get way ahead on our projects," he said.